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CLOSE AIR SUPPORT REQUIREMENTS: A
STUDY OF INTERSERVICE RIVALRY

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1 March 1971

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CLOSE AIR SUPPORT REQUIREMENTS:

A STUDY OF INTERSERVICE RIVALRY

AN INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH REPORT

by

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US Army War College
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1 March 1971

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Robert E. Ruhrow, COL., USAF

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FORMAT: An Individual Research Report

The basic question addressed in this research report is who has the responsibility for determining the quantity and quality of close air support required by the Army. The question arose as a result of the reported inability of the Air Force to provide the necessary support to the Army during the first five years of the Vietnam involvement. The continued existence of this unresolved question is evidenced by the current efforts of both Services to procure a close air support vehicle--the Army, the Cheyenne; and the Air Force, the AX. To answer this question, the reasons behind the lack of close air support were investigated. In addition, the statutory roles and missions of each Service were considered. Consideration was given the impact that national strategy has on the force structures the Services are authorized to procure and operate. The research revealed that the primary cause of the deficiency was a disparity in the priority given by the Services to close air support as a result of the national strategy being followed. To correct this variance in Service priorities, the report suggests that the Army and the Air Force mutually agree on future close air support requirements based on the force structure authorized the Army. Resources to support this close air support requirement would be requested and justified by the Army in its annual budget request. Responsibility for procurement and operation of the aircraft would be assigned to the Air Force. Although manned and operated by the Air Force, these dedicated assets would be under the operational command of the Army during training exercises and in combat. The proposed procedures would require major alterations in present uniservice methods of operation but would result in an assured capability at a reduced cost in resources. The recommended procedures should be adopted by the Defense Department, the Army, and the Air Force as soon as possible.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

. . . we feel that in its [the Air Force] magnificent accomplishments in the wild blue yonder it has tended to ignore the foot soldier in the dirty brown under.¹

The above statement is from the conclusion reached by a House Armed Services Committee. The Committee was investigating the effectiveness of the close air support the Air Force provided the Army in South Vietnam during the 1961 to 1965 time period. It is a damning statement insofar as the Air Force is concerned. It was not made in haste or offhand, but was the result of four weeks of testimony delivered by Vietnam veterans, both Air Force and Army, as well as high-ranking officials of both Services.

Some Air Force officials can and may dispute the conclusion voiced by the Armed Services Committee. Even some Army officials may believe that it does not represent the facts. While the validity of the conclusion does impact on this research paper, proving or disproving the factualness of the statement is not the major thrust of the effort. The fact that an influential House Committee has issued the statement as one of its official findings removes the need for determining the truthfulness of the conclusion.

¹US Congress, House, Committee on Armed Services, Close Air Support, 89th Cong., 2d sess., 1966, p. 4872 (hereafter referred to as "Congress, Close Air Support").

The statement is a fact to the members of the Committee, and they control the defense purse strings that allow the Services to function.

In addition to the House Committee reaching this conclusion, both the Air Force and the Army have acted as if a deficiency in close air support capability does exist. On the Army side, the development of the UH-1 Gunship, the follow-on AG-1 Cobra, and the pending development of the AH-56 Cheyenne, seem to indicate there is a need for better close air support.² The Air Force, in answer to what it sees as the Army's incursion into what has been interpreted as an assigned Air Force mission area, has resorted to rapid procurement of the OV-10 Bronco, the A-37, and an accelerated research and development effort on a specialized close air support aircraft called the AX.³ In addition to these positive actions, the Air Force has felt it necessary to attack the Army procurement of the Cobra and Cheyenne as an attempt to usurp a recognized and properly assigned Air Force mission.⁴ The following paragraph presents a general statement of the problem that brought about these actions, as the author sees it.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The primary purpose of this research paper is to look at the close air support controversy as a problem of determining force

²Brooke Nihart, et al., "Sixty Years of Unresolved Problems," Armed Forces Journal, (25 April 1970), pp. 22-23.

³Edgar E. Ulsamer, "AX: Lethal, Accurate, Agile, and Cheap," Air Force and Space Digest, (January 1970), pp. 33-39.

⁴Nihart, pp. 22-23.

requirements necessary to provide such support. Is the business of determining close air support requirements, and consequently mission capability, the responsibility of the Army or the Air Force? Once the answer to this question has been obtained, a follow-on question must be addressed: How should these requirements be determined? To find the answer to these two questions, the author proposes to investigate and analyze the following areas and subjects.

ORGANIZATION OF THE PAPER

In order to set the stage for the discussion to follow, it will be necessary to determine the causes behind the Army-Air Force close air support controversy. This will be accomplished by looking at the findings of the Armed Services Committee mentioned earlier. The report will then consider how each of the Services has reacted to the controversy by considering some of the weapons systems being operated and/or proposed by both the Army and the Air Force. This section of the report should clearly establish that a controversy does exist and that the controversy centers around a claimed demonstrated lack of close air support capability on the part of the Air Force.

The second general topic area to be considered is the question of how this reported deficiency on the part of the Air Force came to exist. This discussion will involve a look at the roles and missions assigned to each of the Services and the intraservice

priority listing of each of these roles and missions. This will lead to a discussion of the force structure possessed by the Air Force during the 1961 to 1966 time period. This will not be a review of the entire force structure; but only a look at what was available to provide close air support to the Army.

The next chapter will address the reasons for the Air Force force structure identified earlier. Of necessity, this will entail a review of the general national strategy followed during the late 1950s and the Defense and Service priorities resulting from that strategy.

At this point, it will be possible to draw some interim conclusions. The paper will consider the possibility of recognizing the deficiency in conventional war-fighting capability and the corrective action that could have been taken by the newly elected Kennedy administration that took office in 1961. This investigation will reveal that the deficiency was identified, that the framework did exist for its correction, but that nothing was done to effect corrective action. This discussion will lead into the final chapter where overall conclusions will be drawn and where procedures will be recommended that will prevent recurrence of similar deficiencies in the future.

The research report is designed to highlight some planning and coordinating difficulties that now exist between the separate Services that can and should be easily corrected. Many of these difficulties occur as a result of old Service conflicts that are

tenaciously retained by both the Army and the Air Force. Neither the Services nor the United States can afford to allow these conflicts to continue. They result in a waste of resources and needless duplication of effort. Problems of this nature are not restricted to close air support or to just the Army and Air Force. The close air support controversy is simply a vehicle with which to examine the basic problem. At the conclusion of this report, the reader will find an appendix listing some additional areas of Service conflict that are probably caused by the same factors that brought on the close air support controversy. These problems are capable of being solved by using the same procedures recommended in this report.

INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURES

Although the time period addressed by this research effort is the 1955-1966 era, knowledge of the factors bearing on the problem have, for the most part, emerged since 1966. Much of the discussion is still a live issue today. As a result, a great deal of the research will be directed to Congressional Reports and current authoritative publications. It will be necessary to look at historical records and reports that reveal conditions that existed during the period in question. However, intellectual publications and books that are based on opinion will be avoided as much as possible.

ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

As in any research effort of specific length, certain limitations must be set and some assumptions must be made concerning the material being presented. The limitations have been alluded to in the preceding paragraphs of this chapter. They are outlined in the following section in order to insure they are understood.

Limitations

1. The discussion will be limited to the close air support provided in South Vietnam during the 1961-1966 time period. There will be no consideration of the close air support capabilities that the Air Force might now (1971) possess.

2. The discussion is limited to close air support as a topic that is indicative of a controversy between Services that did and does exist in other areas.

3. The discussion is limited in time to the conditions that existed during the 1955 to 1966 time period.

In addition to these limitations the author has made several assumptions that are generally accepted facts and need not be supported by expert testimony. These assumptions are as follows.

Assumptions

1. Modern weapon systems require 5 to 10 years from conception to initial operational capability. Therefore, a desired military capability must be identified sufficiently early to insure it is available when needed.

2. The United States military services will not be fully unified in the predictable future.

3. National resources committed to defense needs will continue to be less than those required to accomplish all the tasks assigned to the various Services, unless a major war occurs. Therefore, all the Services will be required to establish funding priorities based on what each Service feels are its mission priorities.

Any additional limitations and/or assumptions that arise during the remainder of this report will be identified and recorded as they are discovered. Now that a general overview of the research report has been presented, it is time to look at what prompted the House Committee to make the statement presented as the opening to this chapter. That is the purpose of Chapter II, "The Controversy."

CHAPTER II

THE SERVICE CONTROVERSY

All of the Services have, for a number of years, selectively interviewed and debriefed Vietnam returnees in order to identify and isolate operational problem areas. Because of the nature of the material covered in these debriefings, the majority of them are classified. Possibly the first unclassified report of the effectiveness of air power in South Vietnam was contained in the report published by the Close Air Support Special Committee of the House Armed Services Committee.¹ This report covers testimony given by 15 witnesses during the period from September 22 to October 14, 1965.

COMMITTEE FINDINGS

The special committee was convened because of recurring questions concerning the adequacy of close air support being provided in South Vietnam.² As a result of its investigation, the committee identified several specific problem areas.

Communications

Because of the incompatibility of communications equipment, Army combat units were unable to communicate with the supporting

¹Congress, Close Air Support.
²Ibid., p. 4859.

Air Force aircraft or with the command agencies who controlled the use of these aircraft. As a result, there was a normal delay of 20 minutes to several hours between the request for air support and the arrival of the aircraft on target.³

Forward Air Controller Aircraft

Although the need and value of airborne forward air controllers had been established and proved during the Korean War, the Air Force possessed no forward air controller aircraft in the 1961-1966 time frame. In 1963 the Air Force filled this requirement by "borrowing" 25 L-19 aircraft from the Army.⁴

Attack Aircraft

When the decision was made to introduce American air power into the South Vietnam conflict, the Air Force did not possess an aircraft suitable for this mission. It "borrowed" a number of A-1 aircraft from the Navy in order to meet this requirement.⁵

These are the three major problem areas identified by the House Committee. Because of these problems, the close air support capability of the Air Force during the 1961-65 period can be described as too little, too late, and operating with "make-do" equipment. The members of the House Committee stated that the Air Force had failed in its assigned mission of providing close

³Ibid., pp. 4861-4862.

⁴Ibid., pp. 4862-4864.

⁵Ibid., p. 4864.

air support to the Army.⁶ What reaction did this finding elicit from the two Services concerned?

SERVICE REACTION

The Army reacted to the lack of close air support by developing its own capability, using armed helicopters as the primary vehicle. It must be stated that this concept was not a direct result of Vietnam but originated with several Army studies carried on during the late 1950s and early 1960s.⁷ What did result from Vietnam was the development of a specialized attack helicopter rather than the armed troop transport helicopters originally visualized in the studies.⁸ The first of these attack helicopters was the AG-1 Cobra, introduced into South Vietnam in late 1967.⁹ The Cobra is a two-place aircraft capable of carrying 2.75 milimeter air-to-ground rockets, a grenade launcher, and 7.62 milimeter machine guns. It has no troop or cargo carrying capability.¹⁰ The next generation helicopter is truly a close air support aircraft in that it is capable of carrying some 8,000 pounds of external ordnance.¹¹ This

⁶Ibid., p. 4876.

⁷US Department of the Army, Army Air Mobility Concept, (December 1963), pp. I-1 and I-2.

⁸George C. Wilson, "Army Picks Huey Cobra as Interim AAFSS," Aviation Week and Space Technology, (November 1965), p. 22.

⁹J. W. Rider, MAJ, USMC, and W. L. Buchanan, CAPT, USMC, "Cobra or Bronco," Marine Corps Gazette, (May 1968), p. 38.

¹⁰University of Pittsburgh, "Attack Helicopter, AH-1G, Cobra," Department of the Army Project Number 1x141807D174, (1966), p. 2.

¹¹Nihart, pp. 19-26.

machine is the proposed AH-56A Cheyenne and it has become the focal point of most of the Army-Air Force controversy.

The Air Force has reacted to the finding of the House Committee in several ways. The first step was to admit a lack of close air support capability in South Vietnam.¹² This admission provided a jump-off position for several "interim" actions. These actions included procurement of the Marine Corps developed OV-10 Bronco, which began South Vietnam operations in 1968;¹³ procurement of the A-37 Dragonfly, a converted Air Force training aircraft, which became operational in 1967;¹⁴ and the concept formulation of a new, specialized close air support aircraft called the AX.¹⁵ As of this writing, the AX is still the main Air Force counter to the Army-sponsored Cheyenne.¹⁶

THE CONTROVERSY

The close air support argument has not been restricted to the area of equipment needed to fulfill an acknowledged requirement. Instead, it has developed into the age-old roles and missions fight begun many years ago. The Air Force emphatically states that the mission of providing close air support is clearly given to it in all the official role and mission documents. For its support,

¹²Congress, Close Air Support, p. 4845.

¹³Nihart, p. 20.

¹⁴Nihart, p. 20.

¹⁵Claude Witze, "Can We Afford It?" Air Force and Space Digest, (November 1970), p. 17.

¹⁶Nihart, pp. 25-26.

the Air Force has been using Department of Defense Directive 5160.22, "Clarification of Roles and Missions of the Departments of the Army and Air Force Regarding Use of Aircraft."¹⁷ This Directive, published in 1957 and amended in 1960, specifically prohibits the Army's entry into the close air support mission area and limits helicopter size to 20,000 pounds empty weight.

The Army has countered the Air Force's direct frontal attack by attempting to remove the target. This has been done by Army statements that its attack helicopters (Cobra and Cheyenne) provide "direct fire support" as outlined in the Hcwze Board recommendations of 1963.¹⁸ The Army further states that they see a need for both the Cheyenne and the AX and can see no reason for so much controversy.¹⁹

As a result of this difference of opinion in the existence of a basis for controversy, the disagreement has evolved from one centered on whether or not the Air Force could provide close air support for the Army; to the more basic issue of which Service has the sole responsibility for delivering air ordnance. The old roles and missions battle has been reheated. It appears that this is the point where it would be helpful to look at the official statement of Service roles and missions in order to focus on the primary issue of the conflict.

¹⁷Nihart, pp. 25-26.

¹⁸US Department of the Army, Army Air Mobility Concept.

¹⁹Ray K. Flint, LTC, "Campaigning With The Infantry in Vietnam," Air Force and Space Digest, (August 1970), p. 50.

CHAPTER III

ROLES AND MISSIONS

Many individuals believe that the roles and missions disagreements that emerge periodically between the Army and the Air Force are a result of the separation of those Services that occurred in 1947. This is not so. The controversy over the correct use and control of air power has existed almost from the day the Army received its first flying machine. One of the more famous examples of this disagreement is the case of General Billy Mitchell who was forced out of the Army as a result of his support of airpower and its use in land warfare.¹

SEPARATE SERVICES

The National Security Act of 1947 established a separate Air Force as well as creating the Department of Defense as a civilian control agency over all US military services. Subsequent amendments have acted to clarify the duties and responsibilities of the entire Defense Department, including the individual Services.² In addition to the Congressional Acts, the Defense Department has more specifically detailed the duties and responsibilities of each of the

¹Alfred F. Hurley, Billy Mitchell (1964), pp. 125-135.

²US Congress, House, Committee on Armed Services, Reorganization of the Department of Defense, 85th Cong., 2d sess., 1958.

Services in the Joint Chiefs of Staff Publication Number 2, (JCS Pub 2), dated November 1959.³ Of interest to this discussion are the roles and missions JCS Pub 2 has assigned to the Army and the Air Force that impinge on the question of providing close air support to the ground forces.

Army Roles and Missions

JCS Pub 2 outlines the overall functions of the Army in Section 2, titled "Functions of the Department of the Army." In Paragraph 20202 of Section 2 one will find the following statement:

Primary Function of the Army. To organize and equip Army forces for the conduct of prompt and sustained combat operations on land--specifically, forces to defeat enemy land forces and to seize, occupy, and defend land areas.⁴

This is the primary mission statement of the Army. It is further clarified by a more detailed listing of the types of warfare and specific responsibilities, which are set forth in Section 2, Paragraph 20204, titled "Types of Warfare and Types of Operations, Missions, and Responsibilities." Subparagraph a.4 states that the Army is charged with operating "aircraft and ships or craft that are organic to the Army."⁵ Subparagraph b.12 places responsibility with the Army for "consulting and coordinating with other Services on all matters of joint concern."⁶ These two statements

³The Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Chiefs of Staff Publication 2: Unified Action, Armed Forces, (November 1959), (hereafter referred to as "JCS Pub 2").

⁴JCS Pub 2, p. 17.

⁵JCS Pub 2, p. 18.

⁶JCS Pub 2, p. 18.

serve to give the Army authority to operate aircraft that are organic to the Service, but require that they coordinate with other Services in the use of these aircraft, if they are deemed to be "of joint concern."

Of greater interest to this discussion of Service roles and missions in the area of close air support is Paragraph 20208, which addresses, "Army Responsibilities in Connection With Close Combat Air Support of Ground Forces." Portions of this paragraph are presented in the following direct quotations.

With respect to close combat air support of ground forces, the Army has the specific responsibility for:

- a. Providing, in accordance with interservice agreements, communications personnel and equipment employed by the Army.
- b. Conducting individual and unit training of Army Forces.
- c. Developing equipment, tactics and techniques employed by Army forces.
- d. Participating with the Air Force in joint training and joint exercises as mutually agreed by the Services.⁷

Miscellaneous Responsibilities to the Army.
The Army is also responsible with the Navy, the Air Force, and the Marine Corps, in development of doctrines, procedures, tactics, techniques, training, publications, and equipment for such joint operations as are the primary responsibility of one of those Services.⁸

These are the roles, missions, functions, and responsibilities of the Army as set forth in the JCS Pub 2. Of course this is not

⁷JCS Pub 2, p. 19.

⁸JCS Pub 2, p. 19.

a complete listing; only a listing of those that have some bearing on the close air support question. There are two important ideas to be gotten from the preceding quotations. First, the Army is authorized to own and operate "aircraft, ships and craft organic to it." The second idea is the stress placed on joint planning between all of the Services in areas of unified operations. More will be said about these two ideas later in the paper. Now is the time to look at the functions and responsibilities of the other Service in question.

Air Force Roles and Missions

Section 4 of the JCS Pub 2 details the functions and responsibilities assigned to the Air Force in much the same order as Section 2 talks about the Army. Paragraph 20402 gives the "Primary Functions of the Air Force."

To organize, train, and equip Air Force forces for the conduct of prompt and sustained combat operations in the air--specifically, forces to defend the United States against air attack in accordance with doctrines established by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to gain and maintain general air supremacy, to defeat enemy air forces, to control vital air areas, and to establish local air superiority except as otherwise assigned herein.⁹

There is no specific mention of the close air support mission in this paragraph presenting the major Air Force functions. While it is uncertain if the order in which the separate subfunctions are

⁹JCS Pub 2, p. 25.

listed was intended to indicate a priority of individual missions, it appears that it has been interpreted as such. There are five subparagraphs under Paragraph 20402 which further define the general functions outlined above. The last subparagraph, subparagraph e, states that the Air Force is "to furnish close combat and logistic air support to the Army."¹⁰

The types of warfare and operations assigned to the Air Force are set down in Paragraph 20404. Subparagraph a. lists the following:

1. Combat and logistic operations in the air, except as otherwise specified herein.
2. Strategic air warfare.
3. Strategic and tactical air reconnaissance, except as otherwise specified herein.

Subparagraph b.15, give as an Air Force responsibility the requirement for "consulting and coordinating with other Services on all matters of joint concern."¹¹ There is no mention of close air support as a specific type of warfare or responsibility in either of these paragraphs. However, the subject is finally addressed in one of the last paragraphs in Section 4.

Paragraph 20408 is titled "Air Force Responsibilities in Connection with Close Air Support of Ground Forces" and lists the following requirements.

¹⁰JCS Pub 2, p. 25.

¹¹JCS Pub 2, p. 26.

- a. Provide Air Force forces.
- b. Conduct individual and unit training.
- c. Develop, in coordination with the other Services, doctrines and procedures.
- d. Develop equipment, tactics, and techniques.
- e. Evaluate the adequacy of equipment and make appropriate recommendations thereon.¹²

From these extracts of JCS Pub 2 one can conclude that the functions and responsibilities assigned to the Army and the Air Force are reasonably well defined in general terms. A great deal of stress is placed on the need for the two Services to coordinate in the development of joint procedures, tactics, etc. Yet, there appears to be no way of requiring the coordination, nor is there any definition of what aircraft, ships and craft are organic to the Army. As will be shown, these two omissions are the basis for much of the current disagreement between the Army and the Air Force.

THE PRIORITY PROBLEM

A major problem arises in trying to accommodate the primary mission statements of the Army and Air Force in relation to the relative priority of land combat. The Army has but one mission-- combat operations on land. The Air Force has a number of distinct missions, one of which is the support of the Army mission. Therefore,

¹²PCS Pub 2, p. 28.

what is always the number one priority of the Army may have a much lower priority in the Air Force. The Services allocate their resources based on the priority of their assigned missions as reflected in the guidance given by the national strategy decision-makers. The allocation of resources determines the Service force structure and its capability to perform any or all of its assigned missions. An example of how this works is found by looking at the Air Force Tactical or General Purpose Force structure that existed during the late 1950s and the early 1960s. This was the force structure and the capability with which the Air Force entered the Vietnam conflict.

Air Force Force Structure

The Air Force tactical aircraft force structure available in 1961 consisted of 32 Tactical Aircraft wings containing 16 fighter wings and no tactical bomber wings or aircraft.¹³ In his annual report to Congress, the Secretary of Defense stated that the primary aircraft assigned to the 16 tactical fighter wings was the F-100, with the F-105 being phased in at an unspecified rate.¹⁴ Three years earlier, Air Force Secretary Donald A. Quarles had described the F-100 as "a day fighter with a nuclear weapons delivery capability."¹⁵ This statement would lead one to believe

¹³Department of the Air Force, Program Guidance, PG-61-1, (1958), Appendix A, p. 50.

¹⁴Department of Defense, Annual Report of the Secretary of Defense, 1 July 1959-30 June 1960, (1961), p. 12.

¹⁵Department of Defense, Semi-Annual Report of the Secretary of Defense, 1 January-30 June 1956, (1957), p. 266.

that the F-100 was never intended to be a ground attack/close air support vehicle. This conclusion is supported by the testimony of Air Force General Arthur C. Agan, Jr., before the House Committee investigating close air support. Under questioning, General Agan stated that the close air support mission was an added mission for both the F-100 and the F-105.¹⁶ In response to further questioning, General Agan stated that the requirement for these aircraft was a result of the priorities set by the National Strategy.¹⁷ The Committee agreed with this statement without reservation.¹⁸

One can draw at least one valid conclusion from the preceding facts. The deficiencies that existed in the Air Force's ability to provide optimum close air support to the Army in the early 1960s was a result of a force structure built on what the Air Force saw as its priorities as outlined by the National Strategy. What was this National Strategy and did it, in fact, have this type of impact on Air Force planning?

The National Strategy

One of the assumptions made at the beginning of this paper was that it requires from 5 to 10 years to realize a mission capable weapons system. Therefore, the National Strategy that dictates the makeup of the various Services force structure is that

¹⁶Congress, Close Air Support, pp. 4789-4790.

¹⁷Congress, Close Air Support, p. 4790.

¹⁸Congress, Close Air Support, p. 4790.

strategy being followed 5 to 10 years prior to the actual existence of that particular force structure. This means that the force structure that existed in the early 1960s actually was determined in the mid-1950s.

Then Secretary of State John Foster Dulles pronounced the strategy for the 1950s in 1954 when he stated "the basic decision [policy] was to depend primarily upon a great capacity to retaliate, instantly."¹⁹ This statement was supported by the issuance of a Basic National Security Policy which stood as a valid document throughout the 1950s. The policy said that the United States would "place main but not sole reliance on nuclear weapons" for national security.²⁰ This was the National Strategy as set forth by the national leaders. Interpretation of the strategy by the responsible Defense planners will impact greatly on the force structure.

Force Structure Priorities

How the published National Strategy affected the planning and thinking in the Department of Defense is evidenced by the Annual Reports to Congress given by the Secretary of Defense. The reports of primary interest to this discussion are the ones presented from 1955 to 1961.

¹⁹John Foster Dulles, "The Doctrine of Massive Retaliation," American Defense Policy in Perspective, ed. by Raymond G. O'Connor, p. 328.

²⁰William W. Kaufmann, The McNamara Strategy (1964), p. 22.

In his 1955 report, Defense Secretary Charles Wilson stated:

While emphasis has been placed on weapon systems best calculated to deter aggression, our nation is not committed to a single strategy.²¹

Six months later, Air Force Secretary James H. Douglas said:

The intercontinental ballistic missile program was accorded the nation's highest priority. . . .²²

These two statements indicate that the interpretation of the National Strategy in 1955 required the Services to maintain a conventional capability but that the real emphasis in the Defense Department was to be in the area of ballistic missiles. It appears that somehow this desire to maintain a conventional capability became lost during the next year for, in 1956, Secretary Wilson said that the bulk of the Research and Development funds went for nuclear weapons with the emphasis on tactical nuclear weapons.²³ At the same time, Air Force Secretary Quarles commented that the Tactical Air Command was second only to the Strategic Air Force in ability to delivery nuclear weapons.²⁴ Quarles also said the F-100, just coming into the Tactical inventory, was an excellent day fighter with a good nuclear delivery capability.²⁵

²¹Department of Defense, Semi-Annual Report of the Secretary of Defense, 1 January-30 June 1955, (1956), p. 64.

²²Department of Defense, Semi-Annual Report of the Secretary of Defense, 1 July-31 December 1955, (1956), p. 33.

²³Department of Defense, Semi-Annual Report of the Secretary of Defense, 1 January-30 June 1956, (1957), pp. 29-30.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

In 1957, Secretary Wilson testified that the main Air Force tasks were to modernize the Strategic bomber force, the day fighter and interceptor force, and the ballistic missile force.²⁶ This emphasis, or set of priorities, continued over the next few years with the Army becoming actively engaged in the missile business. In 1959, Defense Secretary Neil McElroy reported that the Tactical Air Command force structure was being reduced by 10 wings as a result of the "Army's missile capability to be used in close combat support."²⁷ He also stated that since the primary planning objective was to insure the strategic capability, the Tactical Air Command would take a major reduction in force.²⁸ As late as June 1960 the planning priorities were listed as General War first and then other wars.²⁹

The point has been made and further proof is not necessary. The force structure with which the Air Force entered the Vietnam conflict had been set in the 1950s and could not be altered fast enough to meet the needs of the low key conventional war. However, one possibility did exist that would have aided in overcoming the deficiency in hardware--proper training of the aircrews in the use of the existing equipment in conventional wars.

²⁶Department of Defense, Semi-Annual Report of the Secretary of Defense, 1 July-31 December 1956, (1957), p. 36.

²⁷Department of Defense, Semi-Annual Report of the Secretary of Defense, 1 January-30 June 1958, (1959), p. 8.

²⁸Ibid., p. 267.

²⁹Department of Defense, Annual Report of the Secretary of Defense, 1 July 1958-30 June 1959, (1960), p. 9.

Aircrew Training

The following statements concerning aircrew training in the 1950s and early 1960s is based upon the author's personal knowledge as opposed to any extensive research into the topic. The writer believes he is qualified to speak on the subject as an expert based on three years as a research project officer for Air Force Project CORONA HARVEST. Much of his effort was directed toward analyzing and reporting on the close air support/direct air support/interdiction missions flown in Indochina from 1961 through 1968. In the course of this project, the author became intimately familiar with the pre- and early Vietnam training of tactical pilots in the Air Force. The complete CORONA HARVEST Reports may be obtained from the Air University Library located at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. The specific volumes of interest in this area are titled "Close Air Support" and "Interdiction." The following comments are a summary of the remarks contained in these volumes concerning the training of tactical aircrews.

Not surprisingly, the training given tactical fighter pilots during the late 1950s and early 1960s clearly reflected the mission priorities of the Air Force. The aircraft making up the Air Force tactical force structure were primarily designed for day fighter and nuclear delivery roles. The pilots manning these aircraft were trained to perform the day fighter and nuclear delivery missions. While some conventional munitions delivery training was required--mainly during the initial weapons delivery training given pilots

who had just completed basic flight training--the bulk of the in-service or continuation training was devoted to nuclear weapons delivery. This was a relatively new technique and, because of the implications of the weapons involved, was highly stressed in the training programs. Again, some conventional weapons delivery training was required, but it was minimal.

Coordinated planning and training in the area of close combat support, required by JCS Pub 2, was given lip service but little was done to update and exercise these plans and procedures. Strange as it may seem, neither the Air Force nor the Army seemed overly concerned about maintaining a good conventional fighting capability. While the Tactical Air Force concentrated on nuclear weapons delivery skills, the Army was working to develop tactical nuclear missiles and the famous "Pentomic Division," neither of which was designed to fight a conventional war.

As can be seen, the National Strategy not only dictated the type of weapon systems and the makeup of the force structure but also dictated the type of training that was to be carried out to use these weapons. Because of the strategy of massive retaliation, the ability to fight a conventional war was, for the most part, ignored and lost. Was this loss of capability recognized and did anyone attempt to stop further degradation of the conventional war fighting capability? The next chapter of this paper addresses this question.

CHAPTER IV

OPPORTUNITY MISSED

Up to this point, the discussion has concentrated on looking at past history for indications that a deficiency in the Air Force's close air support capability did exist in the early 1960s. It will be helpful to pause momentarily and see if some conclusions can be reached from what has been covered in the preceding pages.

INTERIM CONCLUSIONS

Interim conclusions can be drawn in three areas covered in the previous discussion. These areas are: Mission Priorities, National Strategy impact, and Resource Availability. Each of these will be addressed individually.

Mission Priorities

While the close air support capability of the Air Force was less than that necessary to provide optimum support to the Army, the reason behind this deficiency cannot be solely attributed to the actions of the Air Force. Nowhere could the author find evidence that the Air Force did not recognize the requirement for a close air support capability. What the Air Force did recognize was the priority of assigned missions as published in that official document, Joint Chiefs of Staff Publication 2 (JCS Pub 2). This document indirectly indicates the relative priorities of the

missions assigned to each of the separate Services. It places the requirement for close air support rather low on the priority list. Again, the author could find no evidence that this priority listing was ever challenged by either the Army, the Air Force, or any other agency.

Instead of addressing the priority problems, both the Army and the Air Force have centered their arguments on the results of this priority listing. These results are the hardware issues and the heated discussion (on the part of the Air Force) of what aircraft are organic to the Army. Escalation of this conflict in the late 1950s resulted in the publication of Change 1 to Department of Defense Directive 5160.22, "Clarification of Roles and Missions of the Departments of the Army and Air Force Regarding Use of Aircraft."¹ The primary thrust of this change is to put a weight limitation on the aircraft the Army may possess and operate. Instead of attacking the basic issue of Service priorities, the change just added more point of controversy.

National Strategy

The correctness of the mission priorities as shown in JCS Pub 2 were further emphasized by the National Strategy of the 1950s. All of the national decisionmakers, from the President down, clearly stated that the number one priority of the Defense Department

¹Department of Defense, Department of Defense Directive 5160.22, Change 1: Clarification of Roles and Missions of the Departments of the Army and Air Force Regarding Use of Aircraft, (26 April 1960).

was in the strategic weapons area. The Army, whose mission remained unchanged, reacted to these statements by attempting to acquire a "missile" role and capability, and by restructuring the standard Army division to something called the "Pentomic Division." The Air Force organization responsible for providing close air support, the Tactical Air Command, responded by concentrating on building a force to fulfill the missions of counter air and nuclear delivery. Although not mentioned previously, the Navy reacted in a similar way by concentrating on ballistic missile submarines and developing a nuclear strike role for their carrier-based aircraft. In short, all of the Defense Forces were fighting to get a "piece of the action." It is doubtful that any of the Services would act differently if faced with the same situation today. In the 1950s, conventional war was not "politic."

Resource Availability

Although not discussed previously, the budgetary constraints placed on the Services as a result of National Strategy also played a major role in determining force capabilities. The decade of the 1950s opened with the Korean War and a defense budget of over \$49 Billion. By 1955 this had been reduced to \$39 Billion, with strict controls over the expenditure of these funds.² The primary control was the allocation of funds by Service. Because of the implications of the National Strategy, discussed previously, the Air Force was

²Kaufmann, p. 27.

given close to 50 percent of the total defense budget. Conversely, the Army received only 22 percent.³ The bulk of the Air Force allocation was directed toward building the strong nuclear force needed to support the doctrine of massive retaliation. Little was left to devote to the conventional weapon systems.

As a result of these budget constraints, all of the Services were constantly required to make fund allocation decisions based on what each saw as its primary Service and National priority. It was a foregone conclusion that some needs would not be met, and they weren't.

These three factors worked together to bring about a less than optimum Air Force conventional war capability in the early 1960s. Ordinarily, this would have presented no major problems. Unfortunately, the requirement for defense capabilities during this period did not fit the force structure. That this might happen was seen by several national figures, the most notable of which was retired Army General Maxwell D. Taylor. His book, "The Uncertain Trumpet," had a large impact on the new presidential team taking office in 1961.⁴ The new team took the first steps toward redirecting National Strategy, national priorities and the resulting defense capabilities. The problem had been recognized and an attempt was being made to correct it.

³Ibid., p. 23.

⁴Maxwell D. Taylor, The Uncertain Trumpet (1960).

A NEW APPROACH

The new executive team included a new Secretary of Defense and a new concept of determining defense priorities and allocating defense resources.

Resource Allocation

One of the developers of the new concept of determining priorities and allocating resources, Charles J. Hitch, explained some of the basic ideas behind this new concept as follows.

. . . we try, first to develop our programs on the basis of broad military missions which cut across traditional organizational lines, rather than on the basis of unilateral plans and priorities of the military Services.⁵

Second, to relate resource inputs--manpower, material, and installations--together with their costs, to military outputs, strategic retaliator, forces, and others.⁶

These statements by Hitch indicate that at least he had recognized the basic problems associated with resource allocation priorities and intended to correct them with his new concept. However, Hitch may have been thinking about corrective actions at least one level of decisionmaking too high. This statement is based on a May 1953 paper published by Hitch titled "Suboptimization in Operations Problems."⁷

⁵Charles J. Hitch, "Planning-Programming-Budgeting System," in American Defense Policy, ed. by Raymond G. O'Connor, (1965), p. 213.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Charles J. Hitch and Roland N. McKean, The Economics of Defense in the Nuclear Age, (1963), p. 396.

In a paragraph of the paper Hitch discussed decentralization and suboptimization as it should be carried out in the Defense Department.

An organization the size of a military service or the Department of Defense employs a great variety of resources, many of which have at most a very indirect relationship to its overall objectives. . . . How to compare a few extra maintenance men in a bomber wing with extra ammunition in the infantry from the point of view of national security? Fortunately, such direct comparisons do not have to be made.⁸

In general, the basic inputs that the organization buys are significant because of their effect on what might be called a weapon system--which are aggregates of men and equipment whose performance can be measured in terms of definable criteria.⁹

Mr. Hitch followed these guidelines when he installed his resource allocation system in the Pentagon in 1963. The system did and still does aggregate resource requirements according to the "military mission" they are to perform. It is at this level that Hitch centralized the decisionmaking process. He outlined what the dividing line was to be in 1963.

. . . one can speak of 'higher' and 'lower' level decisions. One might divide our Military Establishment into total war or strategic forces and limited war or tactical forces. The former might then be divided into bomber systems, ICBMs, active air defense, and the like. The high level decision would be the determination of the division of the total defense budget

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

between total war and limited war capabilities. At a lower level, another organization would be concerned with dividing up the budget for strategic forces into subbudgets for bombers, various missile systems, and so forth.¹⁰

Thus, Mr. Hitch had recognized the basic priority problem but did he understand or recognize the scope and detail of the complete situation? The system installed in the Defense Department did categorize resource requirements into major mission categories. It also tended to pass on to the "lower levels" decision authority as to what weapon systems would accomplish these missions. This was especially true in the case of a major mission accomplished by more than one Service.

Missed Opportunity

Under the system of resource allocation installed by Mr. Hitch, a major mission category was "General Purpose Force." These are the forces tailored to meet the requirements of limited or non-nuclear war. Because of the assigned roles and missions of the individual Services, discussed in an earlier chapter, the General Purpose Force category included all of the US military services. Recall that provisions of JCS Pub 2 required the Services to effect coordination in planning for joint and combined operations. Mr. Hitch apparently felt that this task would be carried out as directed and therefore delegated the responsibility for this lower

¹⁰ Ibid.

level resource allocation to the individual Services. It became the responsibility of the Army and the Air Force to determine what the makeup of the conventional war force would and to provide the required war-fighting capability. Unfortunately, this did not work, as we shall see in the remaining paragraphs of this chapter.

UNIFIED PLANNING

As stated earlier in the paper, the close air support issue has long been a recognized friction point between the Army and the Air Force. Numerous officials of both Services and the Defense Department had published formal statements containing measures to correct the situation. However, it seems that none of these well-intentioned pronouncements ever worked to solve the problem.

In 1961, the testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, Army General George H. Decker stated that the Army had no intention of duplicating the functions of the Air Force.¹¹ Later, he told the Committee that the Army and the Air Force were trying to develop a proper type of tactical support fighter.¹² In support of this latter statement, Air Force Chief General White testified that the Air Force was working on developing a specialized close air support aircraft in conjunction with the Army.¹³ In

¹¹US Congress, House, Committee on Armed Services, Military Posture Briefing, 87th Cong., 1st sess., 1961, p. 671.

¹²Ibid., p. 713.

¹³Ibid., p. 1216.

spite of these statements, Air Force Secretary Zuckert announced that Air Force priorities remained as they had been for years. First came the Strategic Offensive Forces, second the Strategic Defensive Forces, and last, the General Purpose Forces. He also stated that the General Purpose Air Force Forces would have a strategic capability.¹⁴ Secretary Zuckert seemed to cancel the idea of a specialized close air support aircraft if it was to possess a nuclear capability.

One year after these pronouncements, the new Secretary of Defense, Robert S. McNamara, made several interesting comments concerning the Air Force close air support capability. According to McNamara, there was an imbalance between Army ground forces and the Air Force's capability to support them.¹⁵ He attributed this imbalance to a lack of unified planning.¹⁶ This lack would be corrected by giving Strike Command the responsibility for determining the amount of air needed in relation to the ground force structure.¹⁷ It appeared that the solution to the problem had been found and that it would soon be solved. What happened? As stated before, the primary determinant of capability is the force structure available. Was the new force structure a reflection of the "unified planning" announced by Mr. McNamara?

¹⁴Ibid., p. 1078.

¹⁵US Congress, House, Committee on Armed Services, Hearing on Military Posture and H. R. 9751, 87th Cong., 2d sess., 1962, p. 3246.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 3332.

AIRCRAFT PROCUREMENT

In the same Committee hearing in which McNamara gave the unified planning responsibility to the Strike Command he also discussed upcoming Air Force aircraft procurement. He commented that the Air Force was purchasing the Navy F-4 aircraft, a machine primarily designed for the air superiority mission.¹⁸ Because of McNamara's earlier testimony concerning the need for a close air support capability, Representative Otis G. Pike (New York) wanted to know why the Air Force was procuring the F-4 and cancelling the F-105 when the F-105 was a better ground attack aircraft. McNamara replied by stating that the F-4 had two engines, two crew members, a higher operating ceiling, shorter takeoff roll, greater range, and greater payload.¹⁹ Nothing was said about the F-4's ground attack capability.

In relation to previous statements about a specialized close air support aircraft, Air Force General Ferguson stated that studies show "the F-105D or the F-110A (F-4) is superior by a factor of more than two to one in the tactical support role when compared to a specialized close support airplane taking into account the air superiority and interdiction missions."²⁰

These statements reaffirmed the intention of both the Air Force and the Defense Department to not develop a close support

¹⁸Ibid., p. 3342.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 3343-3345.

²⁰Ibid., p. 3966.

aircraft, even though they both agreed that one would be desirable. Subsequent events, including the findings of the Committee on Close Air Support, indicated that no close air support aircraft was ever developed or even seriously considered. This is further supported by a look at the Air Force aircraft employed in the close air support role today, ten years after the need for a specialized close air support aircraft was recognized. (See Table 1)

SUMMARY

From the discussion completed to this point one can see that the need for a better close air support capability was recognized in the early 1960s and that the means for insuring that this deficiency was corrected were available. However, nothing was done and the deficiency continued to exist and even grew. Not until December 1970 did the Air Force begin to actively investigate the possibility of a specialized close air support aircraft with the awarding of a prototype construction contract on the AX.²¹ Planning on the normal development cycle, the AX will not be operational until 1976-1977. In the meantime, less than optimum equipment must be used to fill the close air support requirement.

The primary question facing the Defense Department, the Army and the Air Force is--must we, the Defense Establishment, continue to operate with less than the optimum force structure, including

²¹"Fairchild-Willer, Northrop to Build AX Prototypes," Armed Forces Journal, (January 1971), p. 17.

the development of duplicating weapons systems of marginal capability? It is the opinion of the author that not only should we not continue these practices; but, unless we correct them internally, they will be corrected by Congressional action. Historically, Congressional actions of this type have gone too far, to the detriment of the national defense capability. The recommendations, set forth in the next chapter, should provide a means of precluding a repeat of past mistakes, conserve resources, and provide increased fighting capability.

TABLE I
CLOSE AIR SUPPORT AIRCRAFT CURRENTLY IN USE

AIRCRAFT DESIGNATOR	POPULAR NAME	HISTORY
A-1	Skyraider	Built by the Navy from 1945 to 1957. Reclaimed from Flyable Storage for use in Vietnam.
A-37	Dragonfly	Originally built as a primary trainer and converted in 1967 to fill a need for a simplified attack aircraft.
OV-10	Bronco	Developed from a Marine requirement and now being used as a Forward Air Controller aircraft.
F-100D	Supersaber	Built in 1954 as a day fighter and nuclear delivery vehicle. Adapted to the ground attack role.
F-105D	Thunderchief	Built in 1963 to fill a day fighter and nuclear delivery role. F-100 replacement.
F-4C/D/E	Phantom II	Adapted from a Navy air superiority aircraft operational in 1963.

Source: Brooke Nihart, "Sixty Years of Unresolved Problems," Armed Forces Journal,
(April 1970), p. 20.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Has the Air Force neglected the man in the "dirty brown under?" If so, was this neglect willful with complete awareness of what was occurring and the consequences of this action? Has the Army attempted to build and operate its own "close air support air force?" If the Army has taken steps to develop a close support capability with aircraft organic to the Army, were these steps justified? Where do we go from here? These are just a few of the questions this research report has attempted to answer. It is now time to talk directly to these basic issues, and based upon the information presented in the preceding chapters, reach some hopefully valid conclusions and present some "reasonable" recommendations.

CONCLUSIONS

The House Armed Services Committee was correct--the Air Force and the Army entered the Vietnam conflict with little or no close air support capability. While the concept of close air support operations was known, and to some extent, documented, the resources necessary to put the concept into practice were all but nonexistent.

Unified Planning had been given lip service but does not appear to have been taken seriously. While no official statement could be located which would say it in so many words, it seems as though neither the Army nor the Air Force actually believed another conventional war would be fought. Both Services were building force structures designed to fight a tactical nuclear conflict.

Communications equipment, so necessary if proper ground/air coordination were to be effected, was not available in sufficient quantity or quality to support a useful close support system.

Aircraft, of the proper type and in sufficient numbers, did not exist in the Air Force inventory. Forward Air Controller aircraft had to be borrowed from the Army until a Marine-developed aircraft could be produced--some six years after the conflict began. Specialized close support aircraft, the A-1, had to be reclaimed from salvage until an "interim" aircraft, the A-37, could be made from a primary training aircraft. Nine years after the Vietnam involvement began the Air Force has begun development of a specialized close air support aircraft.

Army aircraft, in the meantime, have continued to grow in numbers, size, capability, and cost. Espousing a mission called "aerial fire support," the Army has developed prototypes of several large, sophisticated helicopters capable of delivering a wide range of ordnance. Although the Army has attempted to avoid the roles and missions battle, its actions speak louder than words. Why has all of this occurred?

National Strategy

The national strategy the United States follows is a result of the role it sees for itself in the world, and the relative importance it gives domestic and international or foreign issues.

The Strategy of the 50s was one of nuclear umbrella-ship with emphasis on strategic military forces geared to fight a nuclear war. As a result, the attention and energy of all agencies of the Government were directed toward preparing for this eventuality.

The Department of Defense Priorities reflected this national strategy. All of the Services, Army, Navy, and Air Force, reacted to this national strategy and resulting defense priorities by attempting to develop Service missions applicable to a nuclear war.

The Army found this most difficult and finally resorted to a restructuring of its basic fighting organization, the Division, into something called the Pentomic Division. At the same time the Army entered the missile field by producing a family of tactical nuclear short-range missiles. This "New Army" was fighting to stay alive in the era of nuclear war. Discussion of conventional war, and the capabilities to fight such a conflict, was not politic. As a result, the Army's conventional war-fighting capabilities were greatly degraded.

The Air Force, meanwhile, was facing a different problem. As a Service, the Air Force greatly benefited from the national

strategy since it owned the bulk of the nuclear war forces. However, within the Air Force another battle was being fought. The Tactical Air Command, the Army's partner in conventional war, was faced with a major survival problem. The answer lay in developing a nuclear role for fighter aircraft. This was accomplished by concentrating on building a tactical force structure designed to defend the United States from nuclear bomber attack and with the ability to deliver tactical nuclear weapons. Aircraft designed for these missions were the ones purchased and aircrew training was concentrated on these types of missions.

The Result of the National Strategy of the 50s was an Army ill-prepared to fight a conventional war and an Air Force almost completely unable to provide conventional support for the Army. This was the situation in 1961 when the United States began to recognize its Vietnam involvement and when a new national administration and a new national strategy arrived on the scene.

The New Team

The new national strategy was basically one proposed by a retired Army General called "Flexible Response."¹ In addition to the new strategy, the new bosses brought along a new concept in resource allocation called "Planning-Programming-Budgeting" which was to be installed in the Department of Defense.² This

¹Taylor, The Uncertain Trumpet (1960).

²Charles J. Hitch, "Planning-Programming-Budgeting System," in American Defense Policy, ed. by Wesley W. Posver, (1965), pp. 212-217.

new resource allocation system was to identify the major military missions (outputs) and insure the allocation of sufficient funds or resources to accomplish these missions.

The Problem was quickly identified. Reacting to the statements of General Taylor, the increasing conflict in Vietnam, and the new strategy of a "possible" conventional war, the new Defense Managers quickly identified the problem--a deficiency in conventional war-fighting ability.³

General Purpose Forces, a name given the conventional war-fighting mission, was established as one of the major missions of the Defense Department. Strategic Forces, the ability to fight a nuclear war, was the title given that mission. Decisions on the allocation of resources between these two major missions were to be made at the highest level in the Defense Establishment. However, decisions on the specific weapon systems necessary to carry out these missions remained at Service level.

This split in decisionmaking had little impact on missions that required no interface between the Services, such as the strategic mission. The impact the split in decisionmaking would have on missions requiring Service cooperation was not recognized.

Mission Priorities did not change under the new strategy.⁴ Strategic Forces continued to have the number one priority with

³Charles H. Donnelly, "United States Defense Policies in 1961," in American Defense Policies in Perspective, ed. by Raymond G. O'Connor, (1965), pp. 346-352.

⁴Ibid.

General Purpose Forces second. Also, resources continued to be scarce.⁵

Basic Service priorities remained unchanged from the 1950s. The Army continued to have land warfare as its number one priority. This had never changed. However, the Air Force also retained the same mission priorities, in which close air support was to be found far down the ladder. Although resources were allocated to General Purpose Forces at the highest level in the Defense Department, the Air Force continued to procure generalized multimission aircraft, instead of a specialized close support aircraft everyone agreed was needed. This action seemed to have the blessing of the Secretary of Defense. About this time the Vietnam conflict grew hotter and placed ever-increasing demands on the general purpose resources available.⁶

A Final Analysis

In the final analysis, the deficiency that existed in the close air support capability of the Air Force was a result of several interacting events. The national strategy of the 1950s deemphasized conventional war and the requirement for the means with which to wage it; Air Force priorities reflected the national strategy and prevented Service action to promote a conventional

⁵Robert S. McNamara, "Decisionmaking in the Department of Defense," in American Defense Policies in Perspective, ed. by Raymond G. O'Connor, (1965), pp. 363-364.

⁶Richard M. Nixon, US Foreign Policy for the 1970s, (1970), pp. 127-130.

capability; the new national administration of 1961 recognized the deficiency in this area but did little to correct the situation, even though the procedures were available; under the new administration the overall Defense priorities remained as they were in the 1950s. It was inevitable that, if a conventional war occurred, there would be deficiencies, not only in close air support, but in many other areas also. The system placed the responsibility for fulfilling the need for close air support capability with the Service not having primary responsibility for land combat. The same assignment of responsibility remains today.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The overriding question to be addressed is whether this situation, or any like it, will be repeated in the future. In the writers opinion, there is nothing being done to prevent a repeat of this type of problem. In fact, should a reduction in force follow the close of the Vietnam conflict, it is almost certain that similar deficiencies will be created. This need not be so providing the Defense Department and the Services take positive action to prevent a recurrence. The author recommends the following procedures be adopted by the Defense Department to be used in developing future General Purpose Force structures.

A Solution

The solution that is presented in the following paragraphs actually requires little in the way of new operating methods or procedures. What it does require is a new use of existing procedures and a new way of thinking by both the Army and the Air Force. The key to the solution is one of mission priorities.

Setting Priorities

One must recognize that the national goals, objectives and strategies will continue to dictate the overall priorities of the entire Defense program, as well as the priority of the major programs within the Defense Department. Few people will argue that the strategic offensive and defensive programs will continue to have the number one priority.⁷ However, the Nixon Doctrine and the one-and-one-half war strategy also indicate that conventional forces will receive a portion of the available Defense resources.⁸ It is the further allocation of these conventional force resources that need emphasis.

At the present time the General Purpose Forces are considered in three major categories: Land Forces, Tactical Air Forces, and Naval Forces.⁹ Planning the composition of these forces is left to the individual Services, with little or no interservice coordination in determining weapon systems capabilities or the types of capabilities

⁷Melvin R. Laird, Fiscal Year 1971 Defense Program and Budget, (1970), p. 34.

⁸Ibid., p. 52.

⁹Ibid., p. 60.

desired. This is especially true in the type and amount of close and direct air support required by various levels of ground combat. What is done in this area in the way of coordinated planning is accomplished by the Unified Commands in employment planning. In other words, the ultimate benefactor of close air support, the Army, has nothing to say about the type of vehicle (and its capabilities) assigned to provide that support. The quality and quantity of close support aircraft is left to the determination of the Air Force. This would appear to be similar to forcing the Air Force to accept responsibility for air superiority and then have the Army dictate the weapon systems to be used accomplishing this mission. Whether they like it or not, the Air Force is assigned the mission of supporting the Army and must become responsive to Army requirements. There is a way of seeing that this is done.

Combat Force Package

The solution lies in carrying the Unified Command planning procedures into the force structure planning system. This could be accomplished by looking at General Purpose Force Structures as "Combat Force Packages." A review would be made of the various types and levels of conventional combat the United States might expect to find itself involved in during the next five to ten years. The planners would develop a "combat force package" for each of these types and levels of conflict. For example, one

combat force package might consist of a Army regiment as the Land Force, an Air Force close air support squadron (specialized aircraft) as the Air Force, and the necessary Naval Forces to support the type of projected operation. In addition, and this is already being done, the required strategic airlift/sealift forces would be determined.

The accomplishment of this type of planning would require the complete cooperation of all Services, with no regard for which Service played which role. In other words, a true "purple suit" approach to force planning. What the actual composition of the various combat force packages would result from the studies and experience of the force planners. Of course, it would be possible to mix the force packages, employing a part of one or a mixture of many. This would fall into the area of employment planning.

Once the idea of coordinated force structure planning is accepted, it will be possible to attack some of the other problems that are now points of friction between the Services. Some of these are addressed in the following paragraphs.

Roles and Missions

Even a casual observer with only a passing acquaintance with the roles and missions conflict existing between the Services could question the validity of the preceding proposal. One of the first questions to be asked is: Suppose that the Army and the Air Force

managed to agree on the numbers, types, and capabilities of close air support requirements necessary; how would the Army be assured that the Air Force actually procured and operated these weapon systems? The answer to that question lies in several different areas of force structure planning.

First, it has already been stated that under the present system of allocating resources, each Service receives its allocation in the major mission categories and is allowed to develop the weapon systems required to carry out these assigned missions. This would be altered slightly under the new concept. The resources required to provide the agreed amount of close support would be included in the Army's budget proposal, with justification for these resources the direct responsibility of the Army, with Air Force inputs and support. However, when the budget was approved, the funds requested and approved for the close support weapon systems would be clearly earmarked for transfer to the Air Force. This procedure would place the onus for funding support on the primary recipient of the eventual capability. Thus, any shortfall in close support capability could be protested by the Service that would suffer the most.

Second, the Air Force would be required, by the means of legal restrictions placed in the budget authorization, to use the allotted funds for close air support only. This would insure that the Air Force did not drain off resources required to provide support for the Army because of some higher priority uniservice requirement.

Third, the Air Force would be required to undertake and complete all of the necessary design and procurement actions to obtain the force structure previously agreed upon and approved. The design and procurement management team would contain members of both Services in order to insure that the optimum vehicle was obtained and that it was not designed to accomplish something than its approved mission.

Fourth, the Air Force would be given the responsibility for the operation of all aircraft, with the exception of the troop lift helicopters organic to the Army's air mobility concept. This would provide unity of command and give the operational requirement to the Service best suited to operate the aircraft. Training and similar type requirements would be the responsibility of the Air Force working in close cooperation with the Army. The funding required for the continued training and operation of the aircraft dedicated to Army support would be included in the Army's budget request, similar to the procedure followed in requesting funds for the necessary procurement actions. Similar restrictions would prevent the Air Force from misusing these budget authorizations.


Finally, the Army would be given complete command-and-control of these dedicated assets in the event of actual employment, either in exercises or combat. Air assets other than those dedicated to Army support would continue to be under the command-and-control of the Air Commander on the scene. Procedures necessary to effect

the required coordination between the dedicated and nondedicated air capabilities would be resolved by a joint Air Force-Army planning team. The type of air capability visualized as dedicated to support of the Army includes Forward Air Controller Aircraft, the Specialized Close Air Support Aircraft, Search, Rescue, and Med-Evac Aircraft, and short-haul intratheater transports. There would be no distinction between fixed or rotary wing machines. The design and capabilities would depend on the type best suited to meet the requirements.

SUMMARY

The recommendations set forth by this paper stress the need for close and unified action by the Army and the Air Force. These procedures go against old established ways of thinking and operating and fly in the face of long standing biases. They require a major overhaul in Army and Air Force relations and, like some social problems of long standing, will not take place overnight. Nevertheless, it is time for such change. Working together, the two Services can solve this and similar problems and insure the most capable and effective force for the least expenditure of scarce resources. Continued Service conflict and duplication of effort will result in decreased capability and further degrading of all the Services in the eyes of Congress and the American public. Support of national objectives is still the primary mission of the Defense Establishment and it is mandatory that this mission be accomplished

with maximum effectiveness at minimum cost. The recommendation set forth in this paper should help to reach this goal.


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APPENDIX I

OTHER ARMY-AIR FORCE CONFLICTS

There are several other areas of potential Army-Air Force conflict that possess characteristics similar to the close air support problem just discussed. These problems, while not as volatile as the close air support issue, may heat up in the future. Therefore, some action should be taken to correct these situations before they become critical. A description of some of the more evident areas of difficulty follow.

Light Intra-Theater Airlift (LIT). Our experience in South Vietnam has shown the need for a new and improved light intra-theater airlift aircraft. The Air Force has recognized this requirement and has begun work on defining the needed characteristics. However, the priority assigned to this project is low. As a result, the Army has started investigating the possibility of procuring a new heavy lift helicopter (HLH) to meet the identified mission requirement.

Construction Engineer Capability. When the Army and Air Force split in 1947, the Army was given the mission of supporting the Air Force requirements for heavy airbase construction. Experience in Vietnam indicate that the Army is unable to provide this support because of internal Army priorities and requirements. The Air Force was required to activate its own heavy construction capability, under the name of Project RED HORSE, in order to meet

these requirements. RED HORSE is supposed to be phased out shortly. Can and will the Army maintain a capability large enough to meet its requirements as well as those of the Air Force?

Airbase Defense. The requirement to provide ground security against hostile enemy action for airbases has been assigned to the Army. They were unable to provide this security. As a result, the Air Force developed the equivalent of several companies of Air Infantry, complete with light armor, mortars, and comparable equipment. Is this Air Infantry to be continued after Vietnam or will the Army be able to provide this security in future conflicts?

Anti-Aircraft Artillery. The US has been engaged in two reasonably large conflicts since 1945--Korea and Vietnam. In neither conflict has there been a need for anti-aircraft artillery protection for airbases and other rear areas. There were protective guns around the airbases in South Korea, but they were seldom called upon to fire. Between Korea and Vietnam, most of the anti-aircraft artillery capability of the Army was deleted from the Army structure. If such protection is needed in future conflicts, will it be available? The experiences of the Air Force operating over North Vietnam has shown that there is still a definite need for conventional gun protection.

These areas are just a few of the potential roles, missions, and capabilities problems that may become future points of friction. The two Services should determine if the requirements are valid.

If they are, some action similar to what has been proposed in the preceding pages of this research paper should be taken to insure that the requirements are met. It is too late to react after a conflict begins.